

Watervliet Arsenal
North Stone Quarters
(Quarters 6, Assistant Officers' Quarters)
Mettler Road north of Mordecai Drive
Watervliet
Albany County
New York

HABS No. NY-5521C

HABS
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

WATERVLIET ARSENAL
NORTH STONE QUARTERS
(Quarters 6, Assistant Officers' Quarters)

HABS No. NY-5521C

Location: Mettler Road north of Mordecai Drive,
Watervliet Arsenal,
Watervliet,
Albany County, New York.

USGS Troy South Quadrangle, Universal Transverse
Mercator Coordinates: 18.606040.4730550

Present Owner: U.S. Army

Present Occupant: Quarters 6A: Maj. & Mrs. D. Arney
Quarters 6B: Vacant

Present Use: Family housing - officer

Significance: The building, which still serves in its original capacity, is an intact and integral element of the quarters area developed at the north end of the arsenal during the nineteenth century to house the installation's highest ranking officers. Designed by the arsenal's commander nearly a decade before it was constructed, the building reflects the appearance of the nearby commandant's quarters.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Construction of the building began in 1847. The 1847 Message from the President (p. 694) noted that the site for the quarters had been partially graded, the cellar excavated and walled, and work on the superstructure begun. Presumably the building was completed the following year since the date 1848 is carved into the water table at the northeast corner. The arsenal's 1910 historical report (Stephenson) also gives 1848 as the date of construction.
2. Architect: The quarters were apparently designed by the arsenal's commander, Major Rufus L. Baker, about six years before construction of the building actually began (Kyle, pp. 98-100). Baker arrived at Watervliet in 1838 and for the next 13 years pursued a vigorous expansion program that added storage, housing, and manufacturing facilities to the arsenal. He retired after leaving Watervliet in 1851.

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3. Original and subsequent owners: U.S. Army
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Not known.
5. Original plans and construction: No original plans or drawings were located. However, Baker's 1841 correspondence with the Ordnance Department indicates that he planned the commandant's quarters (Building 1, HABS No. NY-5521B) and the north stone quarters to be similar in appearance. Both were to conform as nearly as possible to the general dimensions and style of the adjacent stone arsenal building (Kyle, pp. 98-100). Although construction of the north stone quarters did not begin until 1847, Baker obviously retained his original intention.
6. Alterations and additions: By 1873 one window on each the first and second stories of the north elevation of the main block was blinded with stone infill (HABS Photo No. NY-5521C-8). The first story window remains closed, but the second story window was opened at an undetermined date.

Prior to 1875, a balustrade encircled the roofline of both the main block and rear ell (HABS Photo No. NY-5521C-9). At an undetermined date this balustrade was removed with the exception of the terminal blocks located at the corners of the structure. Two later but undated photographs (HABS Photo No. NY-5521C-10 and HABS Photo No. NY-5521C-11) show the house following removal of the balustrade.

A porch with round posts and decorative brackets was added to the south elevation of the main block at some time after 1875 (compare HABS Photo No. NY-5521C-9 and HABS Photo No. NY-5521C-11). The porch was enclosed in 1942. Plans documenting the latter alteration are in the arsenal's Engineering Division.

A one-story, two-car garage was erected at the northwest corner of the rear ell in 1959. A drawing for this wood-frame addition is also in the Engineering Division.

Comparison of early floor plans published in 1876 (HABS Photo No. NY-5521C-12) and current plans (supplemental material, floor plan) reveal that the main block remains virtually unaltered on the first floor. Small powder rooms have been added below the main staircase in both quarters. On the second floor, the main block bedrooms were reduced in number from three to two, and bathrooms replaced the closets at the east end of the stairhall. Plans in the Engineering Division dated 1940 document these changes.

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Several alterations have been made to the interior of the ell. On the first floor, the partition wall between the laundry and pantry in the northwest corner of Quarters 6B (north) was removed after 1919 to form one room. About 1940, the pantry in the southwest corner of Quarters 6A (south) was divided into a bathroom and laundry. On the second floor, bathrooms were added east of the stairs in both quarters after 1919.

B. Historical Context:

Presumably designed by Major Rufus L. Baker, this house was one of a number of structures erected at the arsenal in the 1840s during Baker's tenure as commandant. Although constructed about six years later than Baker intended, the house echoed the design of the earlier commandant's quarters and the adjacent Arsenal building. Built for two officers and their families, it was the second of five residences constructed during the nineteenth century to house Watervliet's highest ranking officers. It still serves as officers' family housing. (For further documentation see HAER No. NY-1A.)

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The building is one of two similar and nearly intact, Greek revival officer's quarters built at the arsenal during the 1840s. Occupying a position adjacent to the Erie Canal site, it is surrounded by expansive landscaped lawns and curving drives.
2. Condition of fabric: The house is generally in good condition, but its stone walls are becoming increasingly pitted and discolored by industrial pollutants.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The two-story, T-shaped house has a full basement and attic. The main block is 55' wide (five bays) and 45' deep. The rear ell, which is lower than the main block, measures 40' 10" x 49' 9". An enclosed sun porch (12' 4" x 23' 6") is on the south side of the main block. The ell is encircled by porches except on the northwest corner where a two car garage (27' x 25") was built in 1959. The porches, garage, and sun porch are one story.

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2. Foundations: Foundations are coursed ashlar limestone with a dressed limestone water table. The date 1848 is inscribed on the water table at the northeast corner.
3. Walls: Walls are coursed ashlar limestone. The belt courses and pilasters accenting the corners of the main block and the rear corners of the ell are dressed limestone. The ell belt course, which runs at second story sill level, is cut away below each window. Sun porch walls are wood panels. Garage walls are wood panels with battens.
4. Structural system, framing: Walls are load bearing, 2' 4" thick at the main block and 2' thick at the ell. The roofs are supported by timber trusses.
5. Porches: A one-bay portico marks the main entrance at the center of the east elevation (HABS Photo No. NY-5521C-4). Fluted Doric columns set on stone blocks and stone pilasters support a stone entablature.

An enclosed, shed-roofed sun porch, entered on the west, is attached to the south wall of the main block. The corners of the wood-frame porch are accented with paneled pilasters.

A one-story porch extends around the ell except at the west end of the north wall where it is interrupted by the garage. Square wood paneled columns support the shed roof. The balustrade on the north porch and the east end of the south porch is plain wood with square balusters. The north porch and a portion of the south porch are screened.

6. Chimneys: Two large brick end chimneys with corbelled brick caps rise from the roof on the north and south sides of the house. A brick chimney with a concrete cap projects only slightly from the ell roof south of the ridge.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: At the main entrance on the east elevation, two single-leaf, paneled, wood doors with single lights are flanked by paneled pilasters and three-light sides (HABS Photo No. NY-5521C-4). Both are covered with metal and glass storm doors. The two are set below a four-light transom in a recessed entryway. The outer rectangular opening is flanked by paneled wood pilasters.

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Glazed, paneled wood doors with transoms flanked by paneled pilasters and three-light sides provide access to the stair halls on the north and south sides of the ell. Rear entrances for both quarters and the kitchen entrance for Quarters 6B on the north side of the ell have glazed, paneled wood doors with transoms.

- b. Windows: Typical windows are six-over-six-light, double-hung wood sash. Windows on the first floor of the main block are one-over-one-light, double-hung wood sash. All have stone lug sills and flat stone lintels. Four narrow two-over-two-light, double-hung wood sash flanked by paneled pilasters are centered on the east elevation above the main entrance. Sun porch windows are three-over-three-light, double-hung wood sash with three-light transoms.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Both the main block and ell have shallow hip roofs clad with standing seam copper. Stone piers, originally part of the roof balustrade, remain at each of the corners of the main block and at the northwest and southwest corners of the ell. A dormerlike ventilator punctuates the main block roof west of the ridge. Additional ventilators and a skylight are on the ell roof.
- b. Cornice, eaves: A molded stone cornice encircles the main block and forms the capitals for the pilasters. The stone cornice on the ell is plain.

C. Description of Interior: Only the interior of Quarters 6B was inspected. The plan and interior finishes are similar for both Quarters 6A and 6B.

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: The basement is divided at the middle by a wall running the depth of the house. In the main block, there is a hallway adjacent to the dividing wall. Two rooms open off the hall. The ell contains two rooms, and the stairs are located in the room closest to the main block.
- b. First floor: The entrance on the east leads to the hall, which contains the main stairway and a small powder room under the stairs. The living room and dining room open off the hall on the north. A hall containing the secondary

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stairs is at the east end of the ell. The hall turns west to provide access to the kitchen and playroom at the rear of the ell. (See supplemental material, floor plans)

- c. Second floor: The stairway in the main block terminates in the hall. At the east end of the hall are a bathroom and small room. Two bedrooms open off the north side of the hall. A short flight of steps leads down to the rear hallway in the ell. North of the hall are a bathroom, the service stairs, and two bedrooms. The hall ends at a third bedroom at the rear of the ell. (See supplemental material, floor plans)
2. Stairways: The main stairway rises to the second floor along the south wall of the hall. It is an open, straight-run with rounded newel post, thin tapering balusters, and a curved rail. The stairway members are stained dark, and the stairs are carpeted. On the second floor, the balustrade curves to the right to encircle the stairwell (HABS Photo No. NY-5521C-6). The secondary stairs in the ell are similar to the main staircase. On the second floor, the short flight of steps from the main block to the ell has a plain wood rail, as do the stairs leading to the basement.
3. Flooring: Floors in the major rooms and hallways of the main block and the hall and bedrooms in the ell are varnished, narrow-width boards. A border of two parallel, dark-stained strips encircles the dining room, living room, and first floor hall. First floor rooms in the ell have linoleum floors. Bathrooms have linoleum or ceramic tile floors. Basement floors are concrete.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls of the living room, dining room, playroom, main block bedrooms, and the rear bedroom in the ell are papered. Bathrooms have ceramic tile wainscots. Remaining walls are painted plaster. Major rooms on both floors have tall molded baseboards. Basement walls are plaster over brick.

Ceilings of the major rooms are plaster. The dining and living rooms have prominent molded plaster cornices (HABS Photo No. NY-5521C-5). The entry hall in the ell has a narrow, plaster cove molding. The kitchen ceiling is painted pressed metal featuring diamond-shaped panels. The bathroom in the ell also has a painted pressed metal ceiling which continues into the east end of the hall. The center of the ceiling has a molded rectangular panel with bead and reel border and an outer border of diamond-shaped panels.

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5. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: Typical doors are paneled and have shouldered architrave trim with a cornice. The east opening between the dining and living rooms has double eight paneled sliding doors flanked by square paneled columns. The north opening is similar but lacks doors. The interior of the door opening to the stair hall on the north side of the ell is four lights over two panels with three-light sides and a four-light transom. Its sidelights are flanked by paneled pilasters.
- b. Windows: Window surrounds are shouldered architrave trim with a cornice. The paneled reveals contain paneled shutters.

6. Decorative features and trim: Fireplaces in the living room, dining room, and bedrooms (HABS Photo No. NY-5521C-7) in the main block are light gray marble set against the chimney breasts. Each has rectangular openings framed by pilasters, a plain frieze, and simple mantel shelves. The openings are covered with cast metal screens. Hearths on the first floor are glazed tile.

On the west wall of the dining room are two built-in cabinets. Each has two narrow, rectangular, glazed wood doors with shouldered architrave trim (HABS Photo No. NY-5521C-5).

7. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Heating, air conditioning: Heated air is pumped by a furnace in the basement through decorative metal grates on the walls. The house is cooled by central air conditioning.
- b. Lighting: Lighting is provided by modern incandescent or fluorescent ceiling fixtures.
- c. Plumbing: Plumbing fixtures are modern.

D. Site:

Located north of Mordecai Drive, the building faces east onto the Erie Canal site. It is immediately surrounded by landscaped open space, curving drives, and additional officers' quarters on the west and south. The arsenal's industrial and maintenance areas are to the southwest.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural Drawings:

Basement, First Floor, and Second Floor Plans. Published in Officers Quarters at the Arsenals and Armory. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1876. Copy available in the Watervliet Arsenal Museum. (HABS Photo No. NY-5521C-12)

Officers' Quarters Two Family; Basement and First and Second Floor Plans. May 17, 1919. Watervliet Arsenal Engineering Division.

Second Floor Plan. August 2, 1940. Watervliet Arsenal Engineering Division. Shows number of bedrooms cut from three to two.

Sun Porch. April 25, 1942. Watervliet Arsenal Engineering Division. Documents construction of porch on the south side of the main block.

Two-Car Garage for Quarters 6. April 1959. Watervliet Arsenal Engineering Division.

B. Early Views:

East and north elevations before removal of the balustrade along the roof. Dated October 3, 1873. Watervliet Arsenal Museum. (HABS Photo No. NY-5521C-8)

South and east elevations before removal of the balustrade along the roof and construction of the porch on the south side. Dated May 13, 1875. Watervliet Arsenal Museum. (HABS Photo No. NY-5521C-9)

East and north elevations after removal of the balustrade along the roof. Undated. Watervliet Arsenal Museum. (HABS Photo No. NY-5521C-10)

South and east elevations after removal of the balustrade along the roof and construction of the porch on the south side. Undated. Watervliet Arsenal Museum. (HABS Photo No. NY-5521C-11)

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Stephenson, F. J. "Historical Sketch of Watervliet Arsenal." Watervliet, New York: Watervliet Arsenal, July 1, 1910. Record Group 156, Records of the Chief of Ordnance, Entry 30025-D, Subentry 227. Navy and Old Army Branch, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

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2. Secondary and published sources:

Building Technology, Inc. Historic Properties Report Watervliet Arsenal, Watervliet, New York and Rotterdam Family Housing Area, Rotterdam, New York. January 1985. The report and inventory cards for the arsenal are filed as field records in the Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress under HAER No. NY-1A.

Kyle, Francis K. A History of Watervliet Arsenal. Watervliet, New York: Watervliet Arsenal, 1920. Quotes contemporary correspondence on the design of the house.

Message from the President of the United States to the Two Houses of Congress at the Commencement of the First Session of the 30th Congress. Washington, D.C.: Wendell and Van Benthsen, 1847. Notes construction had begun in 1847.

D. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:

Records of the Office of the Chief of Ordnance, Record Group 156, and Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, Record Group 77, Navy and Old Army Branch, National Archives, Washington, D.C. should be further investigated.

E. Supplemental Material:

First and Second Floor Plans, Officers Quarters, Building No. 6. No date. 2 sheets. Watervliet Arsenal Engineering Division.

Prepared by: Barbara E. Hightower
Historian
MacDonald and Mack Partnership
February 1985

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was part of a program initiated through a memorandum of agreement between the National Park Service and the U.S. Department of the Army. Stanley H. Fried, Chief, Real Estate Branch of Headquarters DARCOM, and Dr. Robert J. Kapsch, Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, were program directors. Sally Kress Tompkins of HABS/HAER was program manager, and Robie S. Lange of HABS/HAER was project manager. Under the direction of William A. Brenner, Building Technology

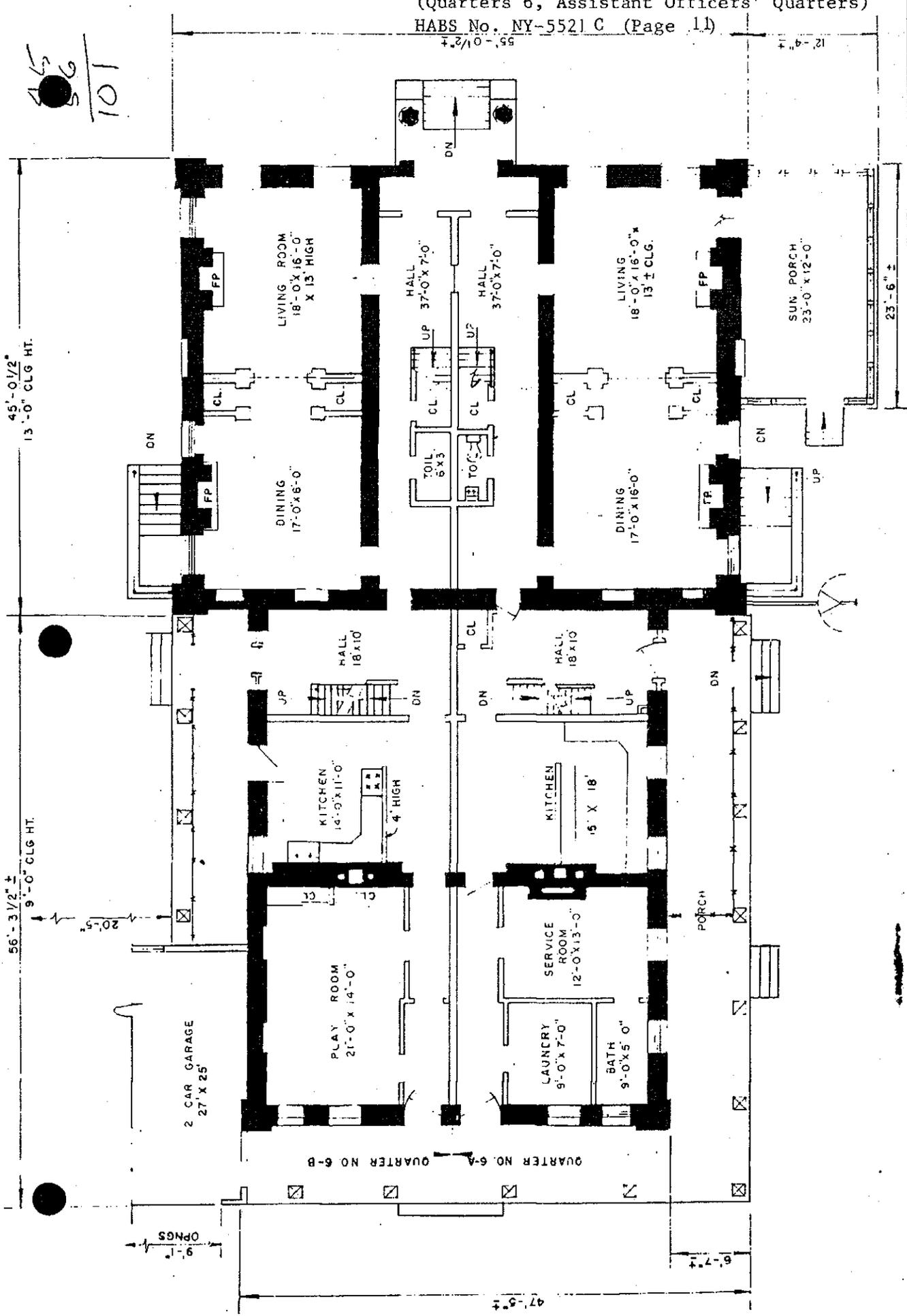
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Incorporated, Silver Spring, Maryland, acted as primary contractor, and MacDonald and Mack Partnership, Minneapolis, was a major subcontractor. The project included a survey of historic properties at Watervliet Arsenal, as well as preparation of an historic properties report and HABS/HAER documentation for 17 buildings. The survey, report, and documentation were completed by Barbara E. Hightower, historian, Minneapolis. The photographs were taken by Robert A. Ryan and J Ceronie of Dennett, Muessig, Ryan, and Associates, Ltd., Iowa City, Iowa. Drawings were produced by Gary M. Louris, Minneapolis.

E. Supplemental Material
Floor Plan

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WATERVLIEL ARSENAL
WATERVLIEL, NY

Drawn by: J. R. GANGE, M. A. E. App'd by: [Signature]

FIRST FLOOR PLAN
OFFICERS' QUARTERS
BUILDING NC. 6

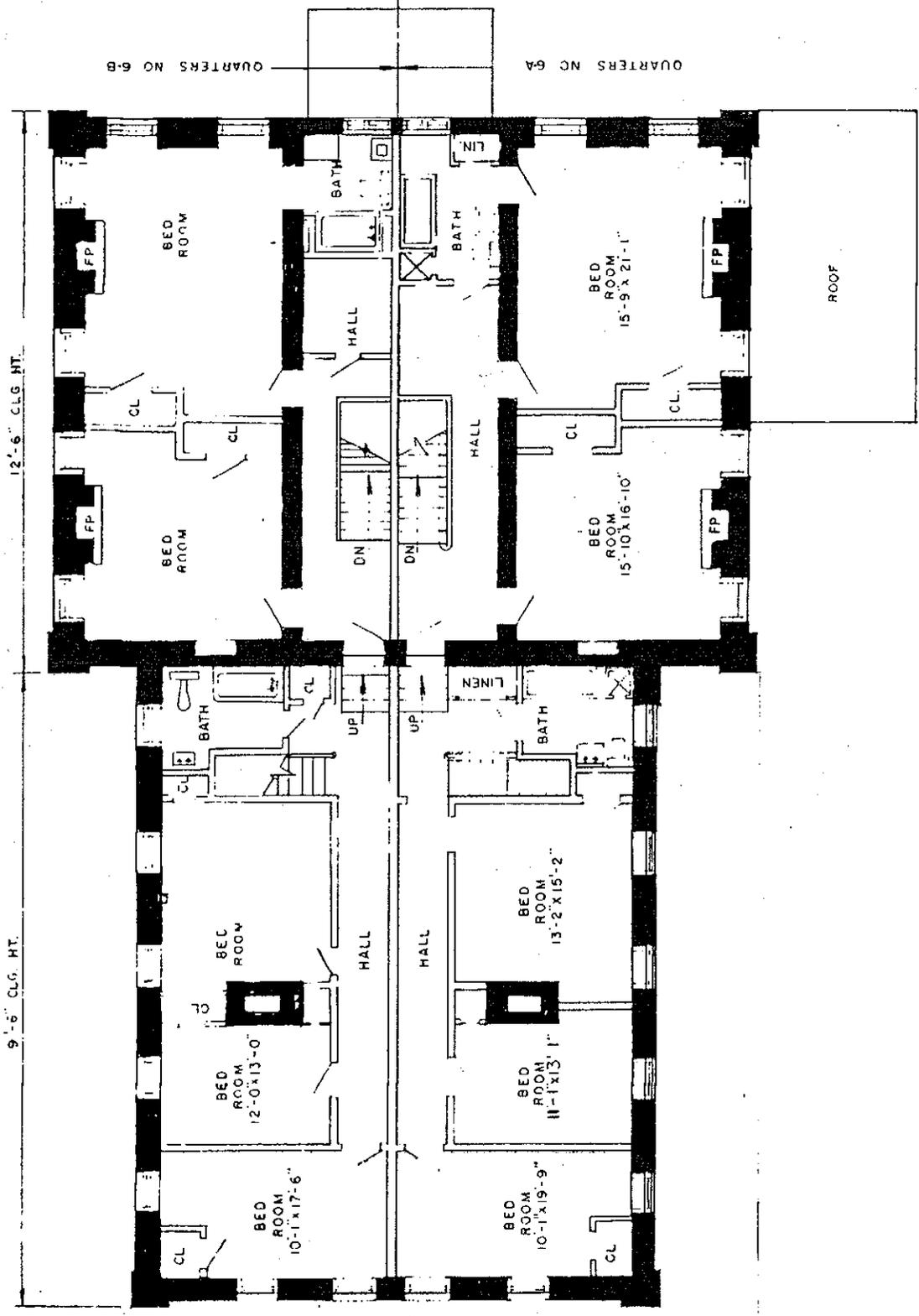
Revisions: 6-4-49
Date: 6-4-49

NET FLOOR AREA
9100
Square feet

FLOOR CAPACITY
Per square foot

E. Supplemental Material
Floor Plan

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12'-6" CLG. HT.

9'-6" CLG. HT.

QUARTERS NO 6-B

QUARTERS NO 6-A

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| WATERVLIET ARSENAL | |
| WATERVLIET, NY | |
| Drawn by: J. R. GANGEMLA, E | App'd by: _____ |
| Revisions | Date |
| SECOND FLOOR OFFICERS' QUARTERS BUILDING NO. 6 | |
| Scale: 1/8" = 1'-0" Date: _____ | |



NET FLOOR AREA
3100
Square feet

FLOOR CAPACITY
1000 - 50 - 40 - LBS.
Per square foot